United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in Geneva, meets with OIC Contact Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina; discusses report on Srebrenica and Tuzla with Special Representative for former Yugoslavia; marks Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in United States; met with President of Syria on Saturday.

+ Secretary-General, welcoming agreement reached by Somali subclans after Hirab Peace Conference, instructs UNOSOM II to release eight SNA detainees; also lifts restrictions on movements of two Somali leaders, citing hope for new momentum in peace process.

+ Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women begins its three-week annual session at Headquarters; Secretary-General of 1995 World Conference on Women stresses goal of universal ratification for women's rights Convention by 1995.

+ Following second round of talks on Abkhazia between Georgian and Abkhaz sides, Georgia asks Security Council to consider sending United Nations peace-keeping forces to region; both parties also seek international commission to assist in economic recovery of Abkhazia.

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Continuing his visit to Geneva, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met today with the Contact Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Group consists of the foreign ministers of Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Tunisia and Turkey. The Secretary-General, who was accompanied by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Marrack Goulding and senior political adviser Chinmaya Gharekhan, expressed grave concern at the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and at the human tragedy faced by the population there. The OIC representatives gave assurances that they would help him in concrete ways.

Also today, the Secretary-General met with Yasushi Akashi, his Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, who presented a report on the situation regarding Srebrenica and Tuzla airport. They were expected to discuss the report further this afternoon at a meeting to be attended by,

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among others, Thorvald Stoltenberg, Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In a message marking the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in the United States today, the Secretary-General described the civil rights campaigner as an example of courage in the cause of justice, and as an inspiration to all people struggling for freedom and equality.

On Saturday, the Secretary-General met with Syrian President Hafez El-Assad in Geneva. The meeting, which lasted nearly two hours, focused on rleations between the United Nations and Syria and on the Middle East peace process. The Secretary-General said that the Organization was willing to play a role in the ongoing peace talks if the parties so desired, while the President stressed his faith in the principles of the United Nations Charter and his support for the Secretary-General.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today welcomed the agreement reached yesterday in Mogadishu between the Habr Cedir and Abgal subclans. According to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), the agreement emerged from the four-day Hirab Peace Conference, held under the auspices of the Imam of Hirab, which brought together 176 delegates, including chiefs, community leaders, religious leaders, politicians, scholars and representatives of the Hirab subclans.

The Secretary-General today gave instructions to his Special Representative for Somalia to release the remaining eight detainees connected with the Somali National Alliance who had been held by UNOSOM II following attacks on its personnel. According to a United Nations spokeswoman, he ordered their release in view of Hirab peace agreement, and the written and oral report he had received in Geneva today from Enoch Dumbutshena, the independent jurist and former Chief Justice of Zimbabwe, who was asked to review the cases of detainees. Mr. Boutros-Ghali also ordered the lifting of restrictions on the movements of Omar Jess and General Orsi Morgan.

He said he hoped that these gestures would reinforce the implementation of peace in Somalia and give a new momentum to the process of national reconciliation.

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Addressing the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as it began its three-week annual session at Headquarters this morning, Gertrude Mongella, the Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women, stressed the goal of universal ratification for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. But ways and means were needed to address the large number of reservations to it. She asked the Committee to review those reservations which ran contrary to the objective of the Convention or which were incompatible with international treaty law.

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Mrs. Mongella pointed out that as of October 1993, 130 States parties had ratified and acceded to the Convention. All the States in Latin America and the Caribbean had become party to the it, making that the first region in the world to have total ratification. If, by the time Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995, the Convention had become the first human rights instrument to achieve universal ratification, she said, it would be a great affirmation of the world's commitment to its principles.

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Following the second round of negotiations between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides in the conflict concerning Abkhazia, Georgia has requested that a meeting of the Security Council be convened as soon as possible to consider dispatching United Nations peace-keeping forces to the region. According to a joint communiqué on the meeting, conveyed to the Council by Georgia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and dated 14 January, the parties also expressed interest in the establishment of an international commission to assist in the economic recovery of Abkhazia.

The talks were held in Geneva, from 11 to 13 January, under the aegis of the United Nations, with the facilitation of the Russian Federation and participation by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The communiqué noted that while uncontrolled armed groups were continuing to carry out hostilities in certain areas, most provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding the parties signed last December were being implemented. That had included an "all-for-all" exchange of prisoners. The parties reaffirmed their commitment not to use force or the threat of force against each other and that their primary objective was a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict.
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